AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

The specification has been amended as follows:

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[0013] Since the suppression of exhaust flow is stopped or reduced when the internal combustion engine is started while the vehicle lies in the initial stage of accelerating from standstill, i.e. while the engine is run at a low speed and with a high load applied thereto, the internal EGR amount is prevented from increasing and deteriorating combustion state, and hence combustion stability can be ensured. Then, when the period of time elapsed after the vehicle starts accelerating from standstill exceeds the predetermined period of time, i.e. when combustion stability can be ensured even if exhaust flow is suppressed, the suppression of exhaust flow is resumed. As a result, it is possible to minimize the period of time for which the suppression of exhaust flow is stopped or reduced, and reduce the emission of toxic substances and quickly activate a catalyst in a satisfactory manner.

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The heading after paragraph [0035] has been amended as follows:

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ~~PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS~~PRESENT INVENTION

[0036] The present invention will now be described in detail with reference to the drawings showing ~~preferred~~ embodiments thereof.

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[0049] Connected to an input of the ECU 10 are a variety of sensors such as a crank angle sensor 52 which detects the crank angle of the engine 1, a water temperature sensor (cold state detecting means) 54 which detects the cooling water temperature Tw of the engine 1, an accel position sensor 56 (APS) (load detecting means) which detects the stroke of an accel pedal 55, i.e. the angle of depression of the accelerator pedal 55, a vehicle speed sensor (vehicle speed detecting means) 58 which detects the vehicle speed V, an idle switch (SW) 59 which detects an idle state, as well as the above described TPS 18 and O_2 sensor 22, so that detection information from these sensors is input to the ECU 10. It should be noted that the engine speed Ne is detected based on information indicative of the crank angle output from the crank angle sensor 52 (engine speed detecting means).

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[0053] However, in the case where it is configured such that the flow of exhaust is suppressed immediately after starting of the engine 1 (i.e. immediately after the start of cranking), when the engine 1 is immediately accelerated from standstill to come into a low-speed/high-load operative state, the internal EGR amount is increased ~~to deteriorate~~deteriorates combustion state since combustion gas does not sufficiently flow in the cylinders as described above when the engine 1 is operated at a low speed. Thus, combustion stability cannot be ensured, and hence there is the possibility that satisfactory accelerating performance cannot be achieved.

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[0065] Further, even when an instruction for releasing exhaust flow control is output from the ECU 50, the shut-off valve 42 actually delays in response, and hence the suppression of exhaust flow cannot be immediately stopped. Therefore, when the exhaust flow control limiting means stops the suppression of exhaust flow, the air-fuel ratio of the engine 1 is controlled to a rich air-fuel ratio. Therefore, a delay in response during exhaust flow control is satisfactorily compensated for, and as in the case where the ignition timing is advanced as above, the deterioration of combustion state can be prevented, and combustion stability can be ensured. It should be noted that the object can be attained only by compensating for a delay in response during exhaust flow control, and hence, after the air-fuel ratio is controlled ~~o a rich~~ to a rich air-fuel ratio, the air-fuel ratio may be gradually returned to a stoichiometric or lean air-fuel ratio. This prevents deterioration of fuel efficiency.